

Appendix A

Siege of Beirut: An Illustration of the Fundamentals of Urban Operations

The IDF had neither the strategy nor the experience nor the configuration of forces to fight and sustain a house-to-house campaign in Beirut.

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Operation Peace for Galilee: The Israeli-PLO War in Lebanon

OVERALL STRATEGIC SITUATION

A-1. In 1982, Israel launched OPERATION PEACE FOR GALILEE designed to destroy the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) presence in southern Lebanon. On 1 June, Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) launched a massive assault across the border into southern Lebanon. The Israeli attack focused on the PLO, but the operations quickly involved major ground and air combat between Israel and Syrian forces.

A-2. In the first few weeks, Israeli forces quickly pushed back both the Syrians and the PLO. However, except for some PLO forces isolated in bypassed urban areas, such as Tyre and Sidon, most of the PLO fell back into Beirut (see Figure A-1). By 30 June, Israeli forces had reached the outskirts of southern Beirut, occupied East Beirut, isolated the city from Syria and the rest of Lebanon, and blockaded the sea approaches to the city. Even so, with most of the PLO intact inside and with significant military and political capability, the Israelis had yet to achieve the objective of OPERATION PEACE FOR GALILEE. The Israeli command had to make a decision. It had three choices: permit the PLO to operate in Beirut; execute a potentially costly assault of the PLO in the city; or lay siege to the city and use the siege to successfully achieve the objective. The Israelis opted for the latter.

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ISRAELI MILITARY POSITION

A-3. The Israelis had an excellent position around Beirut. They occupied high ground to the south and west, virtually dominating the entire city. Israeli naval forces controlled the seaward approaches to Beirut. The Israelis' position was also strong defensively, capable of defeating any attempt to break out of or into the city from northern Lebanon or Syria. The Israeli air force had total and complete air superiority. The Israelis controlled the water, fuel, and food sources of West Beirut. Although the PLO

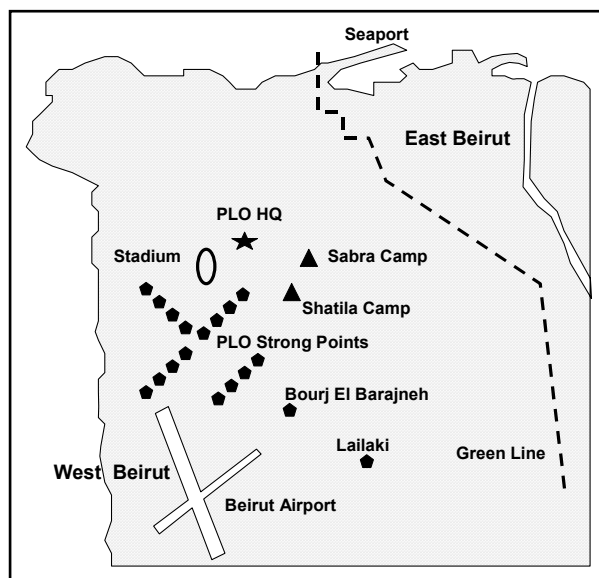


Figure A-1. The City of Beirut

forces had stockpiles of food and supplies, the Israelis regulated the food, water, and generating power for the civil population.

A-4. Despite the superior positioning of Israeli forces, the IDF faced significant challenges to include the combat power of the PLO, Syria, and other threats in Beirut. Israeli doctrine and training did not emphasize urban operations. Additionally, Israel was constrained by its desire to limit collateral damage and friendly and noncombatant casualties. Organizationally, the Israeli army was not optimized to fight in urban terrain. Armor and self-propelled artillery formations dominated the Israeli forces, and most Israeli infantry was mechanized. The Israeli forces had only a few elite formations of traditional dismounted infantry.

PLO MILITARY POSITION

A-5. Despite being surrounded and cut off from support, the PLO position in Beirut offered numerous advantages in addition to the characteristic advantages of urban defense. The PLO had long anticipated an Israeli invasion of southern Lebanon; it had had months to prepare bunkers, obstacles, and the defensive plan of Beirut and other urban areas. Approximately 14,000 Arab combatants in West Beirut readied to withstand the Israeli siege. This was done with the advice of Soviet, Syrian, and east European advisors. The preparation included stockpiling essential supplies in quantities sufficient to withstand a six-month siege. Also, the PLO fighters integrated into the civil populations of the urban areas. Often their families lived with them. The civil population itself was friendly and provided both information and concealment for PLO forces. PLO fighters were experienced in urban combat and knew the urban terrain intimately. PLO forces had been involved in urban fighting against Syrian conventional forces and Christian militias in Beirut several years prior to the Israeli invasion. Finally, the organization of the PLO—

centered on small teams of fighters armed with machine-guns and antitank weapons, and trained in insurgent, hit-and-run tactics—was ideally suited to take maximum advantage of the urban environment.

ROLE OF CIVILIANS

A-6. Various ethnic and religious groups make up the civil population of southern Lebanon. However, West Beirut's population was heavily Palestinian and Lebanese. The civil population of West Beirut was between 350,000 and 500,000. The Palestinian population supported the PLO. The Lebanese population may be described as friendly neutral to the Israelis. Although unhappy under Palestinian dominance, this population was unwilling to actively support Israel. The civilian population was a logistic constraint on the PLO, which would have become significant had the siege lasted longer. The civilians in West Beirut were an even larger constraint on the Israelis. The presence of civilians significantly limited the ability of the Israelis to employ firepower. However, the Palestine refugee camps located in West Beirut were both civilian centers and military bases. The Israeli constraints on artillery and other systems against these parts of the city were much less restrictive than in other parts of West Beirut where the population was mostly Lebanese and where fewer key military targets existed.

A-7. The PLO knew of the Israeli aversion to causing civil casualties and purposely located key military centers, troop concentrations, and logistics and weapons systems in and amongst the population—particularly the refugee Palestinian population in the southern part of West Beirut. Tactically, they used the civilians to hide their forces and infiltrate Israeli positions.

A-8. The friendly Palestinian population provided intelligence to the PLO while the friendly Lebanese population provided intelligence for the IDF. Throughout the siege, the IDF maintained a policy of free passage out of Beirut for all civilians. This policy was strictly enforced and permitted no weapons to leave the city. Some estimates are that as many as 100,000 refugees took advantage of this policy.

INFORMATION OPERATIONS

A-9. The siege of Beirut involved using information operations (IO) to influence the media. PLO information operations were aimed at controlling the media and hence the international perception of the operation. This was done by carefully cultivating a select group of pro-PLO media years before hostilities even began. Once hostilities started, only these media sources were permitted to report from the besieged portions of the city, and they were only shown activities that portrayed the IDF negatively. The IDF did not vigorously counter the PLO plan. In fact, the IDF contributed to it by limiting media access to their activities. The PLO information operations had a successful impact. The international community was constantly pressuring the Israeli government to end hostilities. This put pressure on the IDF to conduct operations rapidly and to limit firepower and casualties.

CONDUCT OF THE URBAN OPERATIONS

A-10. The siege of Beirut began 1 July (see Figure A-2). By 4 July, Israeli forces occupied East Beirut, the Green Line separating East and West Beirut, and dominating positions south of the airport. IDF naval forces also controlled the sea west and north of Beirut. On 3 and 4 July, IDF artillery and naval fire began a regular campaign of firing on military targets throughout West Beirut. On 4 July, the IDF cut power and water to the city.

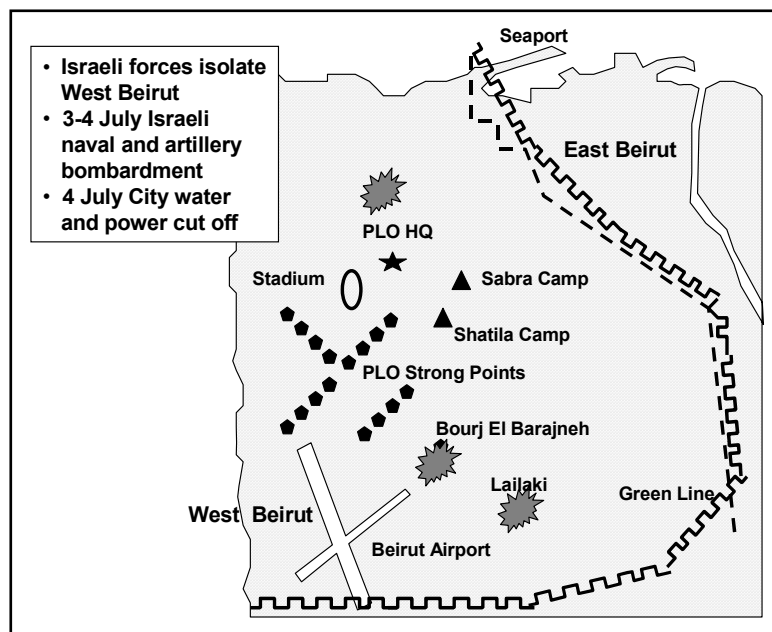


Figure A-2. Initial Conduct of the Urban Operation

A-11. From 5 to 13 July, the Israeli fires continued to pound PLO targets in West Beirut. The PLO gave one significant response, firing on an Israeli position south of the city and causing several casualties. On 7 July, reacting to international pressure, the IDF returned power and water to West Beirut's civil population. On 11 July, the IDF launched its first attack, probing the southern portion of the airport with an armored task force (see Figure A-3). The PLO repulsed this attack and destroyed several IDF armored vehicles.

A-12. On 13 July, both sides entered into a cease-fire that lasted until 21 July. They began negotiations, mediated by international community, to end the siege. The PLO used this period to continue to fortify Beirut. The Israelis used the time to train their infantry and other arms in urban small unit tactics in Damour, a town the Israeli paratroopers had captured.

A-13. The cease-fire ended on 21 July as PLO forces launched three attacks on IDF rear areas. The Israelis responded with renewed and even more vigorous artillery, naval, and air bombardment of PLO positions in the city. The IDF attacks went on without respite until 30 July. On 28 July, the IDF renewed its ground attack in the south around the airport (see Figure A-4). This time IDF forces methodically advanced and captured a few hundred meters of ground establishing a toehold.

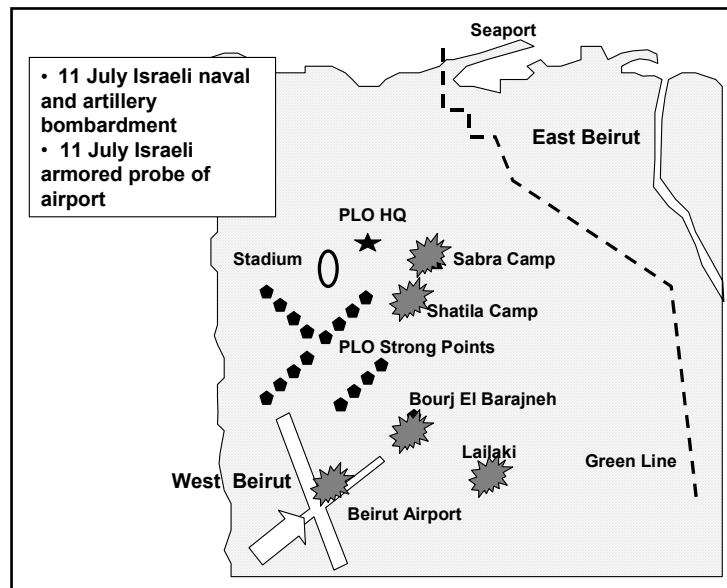


Figure A-3. Israeli Probe of PLO Defenses

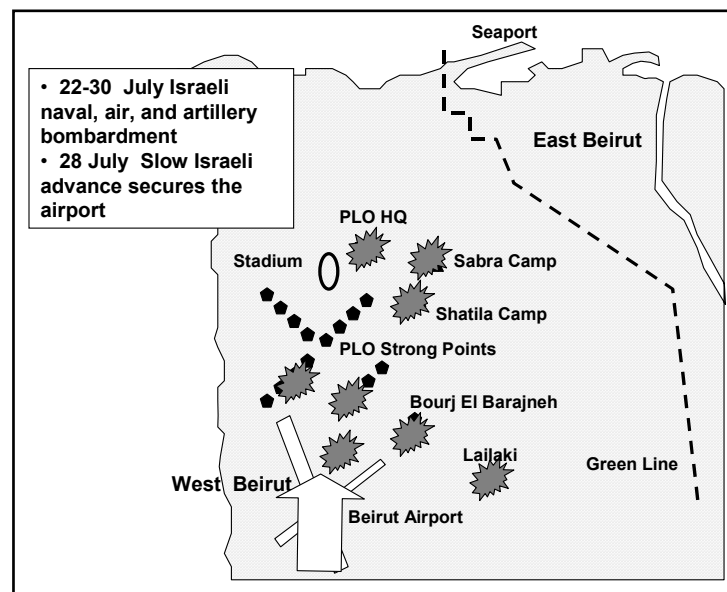


Figure A-4. Initial Israeli Attack

A-14. The Israeli bombardment stopped On 31 July. However, on 1 August the IDF launched its first major ground attack, successfully seizing Beirut airport in the south (see Figure A-5 on page A-6). Israeli armored forces began massing on 2 August along the green line, simultaneously continuing the attack from the south to the outskirts of the Palestinian positions at Ouzai. On 3 August, the Israeli forces continued to reinforce both their southern attack forces and forces along the green line to prepare for continuing offensive operations. On 4 August, the IDF attacked at four different places. This was the much-anticipated major Israeli offensive.

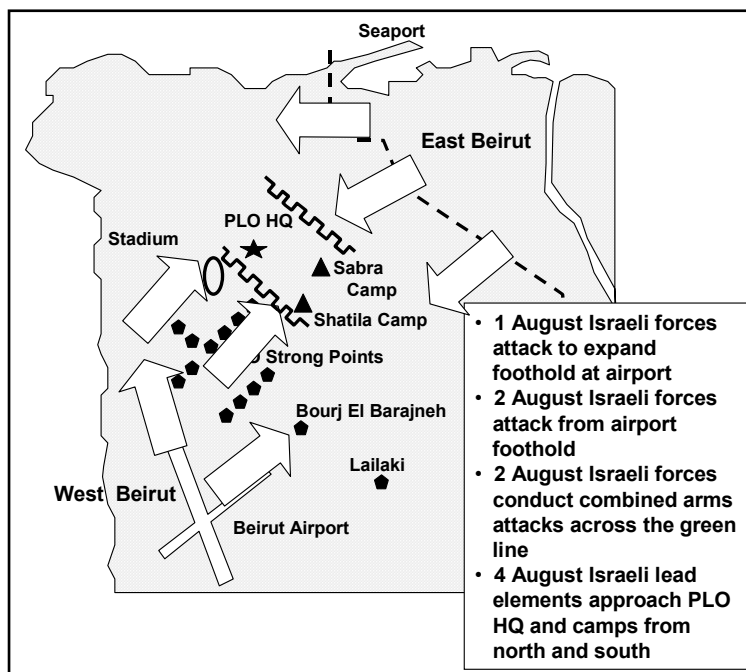


Figure A-5. Final Israeli Attack

A-15. The Israeli attack successfully disrupted the coherence of the PLO defense. The southern attack was the most successful: it pushed PLO forces back to their camps of Sabra and Shatila and threatened to overrun PLO headquarters. Along the green line the IDF attacked across three crossing points. All three attacks made modest gains against stiff resistance. For this day's offensive, the Israelis suffered 19 killed and 84 wounded, the highest single day total of the siege, bringing the total to 318 killed. Following the major attacks on 4 August, Israeli forces paused and, for four days, consolidated their gains and prepared to renew the offensive. Skirmishes and sniping continued, but without significant offensive action. On 9 August, the IDF renewed air and artillery attacks for four days. This activity culminated on 12 August with a massive aerial attack that killed over a hundred and wounded over 400—mostly civilians. A cease-fire started the next day and lasted until the PLO evacuated Beirut on 22 August.

LESSONS

A-16. The Israeli siege of West Beirut was both a military and a political victory. However, the issue was in doubt until the last week of the siege. Military victory was never in question; the issue in doubt was whether the Israeli government could sustain military operations politically in the face of international and domestic opposition. On the other side, the PLO faced whether they could last militarily until a favorable political end could be negotiated. The answer was that the PLO's military situation became untenable before the Israeli political situation did.

A-17. This favorable military and political outcome stemmed from the careful balance of applying military force with political negotiation. The Israelis also

balanced the type of tactics they employed against the domestic aversion to major friendly casualties and international concern with collateral damage.

PERFORM FOCUSED INFORMATION OPERATIONS

A-18. The PLO devoted considerable resources and much planning on how to use IO to their best advantage. They chose to focus on media information sources as a means of influencing international and domestic opinion.

A-19. The PLO's carefully orchestrated misinformation and control of the media manipulated international sentiment. The major goal of this effort was to grossly exaggerate the claims of civilian casualties, damage, and number of refugees—and this was successfully accomplished. Actual casualties among the civilians were likely half of what the press reported during the battle. The failure of the IDF to present a believable and accurate account of operations to balance PLO efforts put tremendous pressure on the Israeli government to break off the siege. It was the PLO's primary hope for political victory.

A-20. In contrast to the weak performance in IO, the IDF excelled in psychological operations. IDF psychological operations attacked the morale of the PLO fighter and the Palestinian population. They were designed to wear down the will of the PLO to fight while convincing the PLO that the IDF would go to any extreme to win. Thus defeat was inevitable. The IDF used passive measures, such as leaflet drops and loudspeaker broadcasts. They used naval bombardment to emphasize the totality of the isolation of Beirut. To maintain high levels of stress, to deny sleep, and to emphasize their combat power, the IDF used constant naval, air, and artillery bombardment. They even employed sonic booms from low-flying aircraft to emphasize the IDF's dominance. These efforts helped to convince the PLO that the only alternative to negotiation on Israeli terms was complete destruction.

CONDUCT CLOSE COMBAT

A-21. The ground combat during the siege of Beirut demonstrated that the lessons of tactical ground combat learned in the latter half of the twentieth century were still valid. A small combined arms team built around infantry, but including armor and engineers, was the key to successful tactical combat. Artillery firing in direct fire support of infantry worked effectively as did the Vulcan air defense system. The Israeli tactical plan was sound. The Israelis attacked from multiple directions, segmented West Beirut into pieces, and then destroyed each individually. The plan's success strongly influenced the PLO willingness to negotiate. Tactical patience based on steady though slow progress toward decisive points limited both friendly and noncombatant casualties. In this case, the decisive points were PLO camps, strong points, and the PLO headquarters.

A-22. The willingness to execute close combat demonstrated throughout the siege, but especially in the attacks of 4 August, was decisive. Decisive ground combat was used sparingly, was successful and aimed at decisive points, and was timed carefully to impact on achieving the political objectives in negotiations. The PLO had hoped that their elaborate defensive preparations would have made Israeli assaults so costly as to convince the Israelis not to attack. That the Israelis could successfully attack the urban area convinced the PLO

leadership that destruction of their forces was inevitable. For this reason they negotiated a cease-fire and a withdrawal on Israeli terms.

AVOID THE ATTRITION APPROACH

A-23. The Israelis carefully focused their attacks on objects that were decisive and would have the greatest impact on the PLO: the known PLO headquarters and refugee centers. Other areas of West Beirut were essentially ignored. For example, the significant Syrian forces in West Beirut were not the focus of Israeli attention even though they had significant combat power. This allowed the Israelis to focus their combat power on the PLO and limit both friendly casualties and collateral damage.

CONTROL THE ESSENTIAL AND PRESERVE CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

A-24. The Israeli siege assured Israeli control of the essential infrastructure of Beirut. The initial Israeli actions secured East Beirut and the city's water, power, and food supplies. The Israelis also dominated Beirut's international airport, closed all the sea access, and controlled all routes into and out of the city. They controlled and preserved all that was critical to operating the city and this put them in a commanding position when negotiating with the PLO.

MINIMIZE COLLATERAL DAMAGE

A-25. The Israeli army took extraordinary steps to limit collateral damage, preserve critical infrastructure, and put in place stringent rules of engagement (ROE). They avoided randomly using grenades in house clearing, limited the use of massed artillery fires, and maximized the use of precision weapons. With this effort, the Israelis extensively used Maverick missiles because of their precise laser guidance and small warheads.

A-26. The strict ROE, however, conflicted with operational guidance that mandated that Israeli commanders minimize their own casualties and adhere to a rapid timetable. The nature of the environment made fighting slow. The concern for civilian casualties and damage to infrastructure declined as IDF casualties rose. They began to bring more field artillery to bear on Palestinian strong points and increasingly employed close air support. This tension underscores the delicate balance that Army commanders will face between minimizing collateral damage and protecting infrastructure while accomplishing the military objective with the least expenditure of resources—particularly soldiers. ROE is but one tool among many that a commander may employ to adhere to this UO fundamental.

UNDERSTAND THE HUMAN DIMENSION

A-27. The Israelis had a noteworthy (although imperfect and at times flawed) ability to understand the human dimension during their operations against the PLO in Beirut. This was the result of two circumstances. First, the PLO was a threat with which the Israeli forces were familiar after literally decades of conflict. Second, through a close alliance and cooperation with Lebanese militia, the Israelis understood a great deal regarding the attitudes and disposition of the civil population both within and outside Beirut.

SEPARATE NONCOMBATANTS FROM COMBATANTS

A-28. Separating combatants from noncombatants was a difficult but important aspect of the Beirut operation. The Israelis made every effort to positively identify the military nature of all targets. They also operated a free passage system that permitted the passage of all civilians out of the city through Israeli lines. The need to impose cease-fires and open lanes for civilians to escape the fighting slowed IDF operations considerably. Additionally, Israeli assumptions that civilians in urban combat zones would abandon areas where fighting was taking place were incorrect. In many cases, civilians would try to stay in their homes, leaving only after the battle had begun. In contrast, the PLO tied their military operations closely to the civilian community to make targeting difficult. They also abstained from donning uniforms to make individual targeting difficult.

A-29. Earlier in OPERATION PEACE FOR GALILEE when the IDF attacked PLO forces located in Tyre, Israeli psychological operations convinced 30,000 Lebanese noncombatants to abandon their homes and move to beach locations outside the city. However, the IDF was subsequently unable to provide food, water, clothing, shelter, and sanitation for these displaced civilians. IDF commanders compounded the situation by interfering with the efforts by outside relief agencies to aid the displaced population (for fear that the PLO would somehow benefit). Predictably, many civilians tried to return to the city complicating IDF maneuver and targeting—that which the separation was designed to avoid. IDF commanders learned that, while separation is important, they must also adequately plan and prepare for the subsequent control, health, and welfare of the noncombatants they displace.

RESTORE ESSENTIAL SERVICES

A-30. Since essential services were under Israeli command, and had been since the beginning of the siege, the Israelis had the ability to easily restore these resources to West Beirut as soon as they adopted the cease-fire.

TRANSITION CONTROL

A-31. In the rear areas of the Israeli siege positions, the Israeli army immediately handed over civic and police responsibility to civil authorities. This policy of rapid transition to civil control within Israeli lines elevated the requirement for the Israeli army to act as an army of occupation. The Israeli army believed the efficient administration of local government and police and the resulting good will of the population more than compensated for the slightly increased force protection issues and the increased risk of PLO infiltration.

A-32. Upon the cease-fire agreement, Israeli forces withdrew to predetermined positions. International forces under UN control supervised the evacuation of the PLO and Syrian forces from Beirut. These actions were executed according to a meticulous plan developed by the Israeli negotiators and agreed to by the PLO. Israeli forces did not take over and occupy Beirut as a result of the 1982 siege (an occupation did occur later but as a result of changing situations).

SUMMARY

A-33. The Israeli siege of West Beirut demonstrates many of the most demanding challenges of urban combat. In summary, the IDF's successful siege of Beirut emerged from their clearly understanding national strategic objectives and closely coordinating diplomatic efforts with urban military operations. A key part of that synchronization of capabilities was the understanding that the efforts of IDF would be enhanced if they left any escape option open to the PLO. This way out was the PLO's supervised evacuation that occurred after the siege. Although the PLO was not physically destroyed, the evacuation without arms and to different host countries effectively shattered the PLO's military capability. Had Israel insisted on the physical destruction of the PLO in Beirut, it might have failed because that goal may not have been politically obtainable in view of the costs in casualties, collateral damage, and international opinion.